

LIFESTYLE INQUIRER

'Mushoku Tensei' isn't like your ordinary isekai power fantasy

Isekais are all about starting a new life, and "Mushoku Tensei" takes you through the mundanity and excitement of that experience

BY CARL MARTIN AGUSTIN

The "isekai" subgenre deals with second chances. Typically centering on underachievers or aimless individuals, these people are sent to a different world (or given a second chance at life) where they are not only granted incredible power but also an opportunity to reinvent themselves for the better.

In a saturated isekai market, "Mushoku Tensei" stands out among its peers with its unique understanding of the genre. With most being simplistic power fantasies, it instead focuses on what it means to start anew, knowing what you already know.

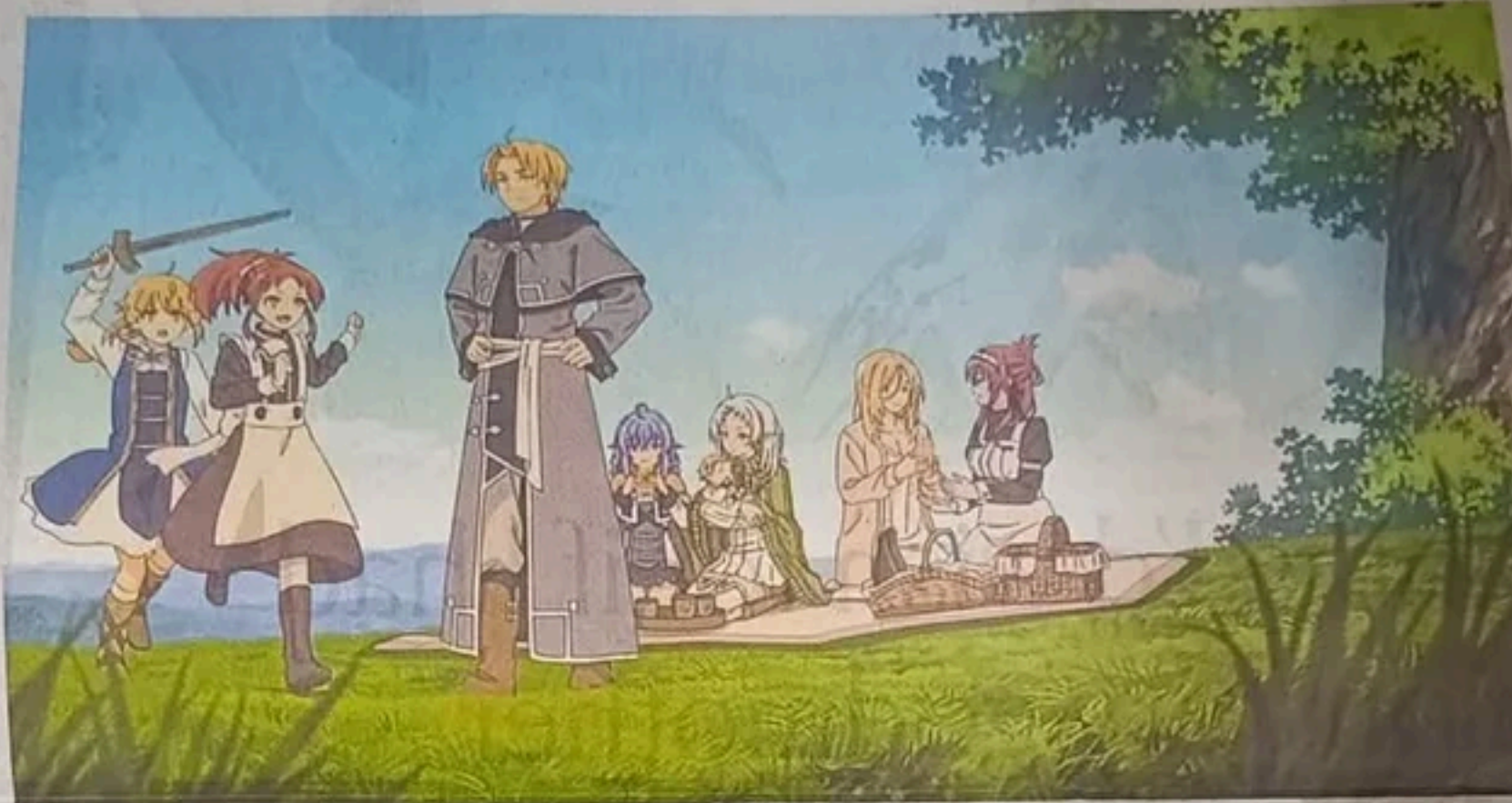
In "Mushoku Tensei," it isn't as simple as starting a new game and having an easier time in the second go-around. It includes confronting your past—all mistakes, wounds, and traumas—and living with the life you've had before starting anew.

Reincarnated in a new world

"Mushoku Tensei" starts off with a nameless 34-year-old underachiever who gets accidentally run over by a truck. However, rather than meet his end, he wakes up in the body of an infant named Rudeus Greyrat.

This brand-new world bears little to no resemblance to the Japan he lived in: castles instead of skyscrapers, adventurers over suits, and magic as part of everyone's daily life. As soon as he realized what had just happened to him, Rudeus was quick to take advantage of his second chance, familiarizing himself with the world around him and learning magic as soon as he was physically able to talk.

He had lived for far too long as a loser, and he wasn't about to let that happen again. After all, he was a 34-year-old man in a child's body—



"Mushoku Tensei" Season 3 | Stills from Crunchyroll/YouTube

and he's got quite the head start this time.

Perhaps a turn-off

However, this is where things get quite weird—perhaps where some viewers may even be put off.

Rudeus, as previously mentioned, is a grown man in a child's body. In a show that deals with a lot of romance, he often expresses attraction toward the other sex, and at times, engages in behavior that comes across as perverse.

All things that are completely normal when it comes to anime, mind you. Normal, yes, but questionable, too. But once you take into account the difference between his physical and mental

age—and that he has dated and gotten intimate with women considered to be his peers—fans continue to debate the morality of his actions.

Redemption and the courage to embrace second chances

As bits and pieces of Rudeus' past are slowly revealed throughout the show, it becomes quite clear that he led a troubled life.

In school, he was severely bullied to the point that he grew fearful of the outside world. He became a shut-in and distanced himself from his friends and family despite them continuing to reach out to him. At one point, his fear for the world grew to such an extent that he even refused to attend the funeral of his parents.

Rudeus, mentally and emotionally, was broken beyond repair, and it was clear from the onset that a brand-new start and all that comes with it—from becoming a magic prodigy to being better looking—weren't going to simply make him change.

Instead, throughout "Mushoku Tensei," we see Rudeus grow out of his shell. We watch him learn to trust people, get past his fears of abandonment, and gain confidence in himself. And we're not just talking about a few episodes of character development. We're talking full seasons dedicated to his slow but steady change.

In fact, he even falls back to old habits every now and then—as it is with real life.

That's the beauty of "Mushoku Tensei." Sure, it feeds into our fantasies of living up to our potential when given a second chance. Still, it shows it isn't so simple getting there. Because even in another world, you still have to learn to live with your past.

Season 3 of "Mushoku Tensei" is now out on Crunchyroll, Netflix, and YouTube

Hapag's...

FROM C1 And for good reason, too. Singson-Javier's delicate hands deliver sharp executions, particularly in the toasted brown rice ice cream (think Filipino cookies and cream), which she fortified with black sesame and puffed black rice crumble, and the inandila ("mother tongue"), a tongue-shaped glutinous rice cake from Kalinga topped with latik.

Overall, the menu is solid with flavors and presentations guaranteed to incite giddy reactions (taho as a palate cleanser), but it somewhat lacks an iconic standout comparable to the mee goreng from Western Mindanao or their controversial (but no less thrilling) batchoy from Western Visayas.

The closest that comes to this territory is the fabulous etaglaw, whose innovative combination of etag in ice cream form and a kinilaw of mahi-mahi is Navoa and Dolatre's splashy display of freshness, smokiness, and a surprising degree of uninhibited gastronomic debauchery.

But perhaps that is the new menu's appeal. Hapag's latest offering is laced with so much Cordillera imagery and narrative—



Pan de Kalinga sourdough bread, tiger prawns, crab fat cream, pickled yacon, mixed herbs



Toasted heirloom rice ice cream

gentle strolls in a clear duck consommé, flat trails in the duck pinunog tart, gradual inclines in the snack course—that the summit becomes greater than its parts.

Left to roam free and thru-hike the Northern Philippines' summits with locals.

Hapag's interpretation of Cordillera food culture is down to earth and disarmingly tender—a soothing balm for hungry consumers.



Duck pinunog ragu, mountain pickles, garlic mousse, chicken skin tuille